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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claim 1. (currently amended) A multimedia transaction processor for facilitating the sale of multimedia material, said apparatus comprising

a media server operable to store a preview version of multimedia material items, which are received from one or more vendors, the preview version of the multimedia material being formed with perceivable impairments produced by generating a reduced quality representation of the material, to the effect that an amount of data required to represent the multimedia material is substantially reduced, and the reduced quality discourages copying of the multimedia material, and

to store in association with the previous version of the multimedia material, meta data representing the content of the multimedia material and data identifying the vendor providing the multimedia material,

a communications processor connectable, via a communications link, to one or more data processing systems and operable to receive, via said communications link, from one of said data processing systems, data indicative of a request for multimedia content from a buyer,

an access processor operable to retrieve from said server preview versions of possible multimedia material content items corresponding to said requested multimedia content by generating meta data from said data requesting said multimedia content and comparing said generated meta data with the meta data stored in association with said preview versions of said multimedia material, and from the comparison retrieving said preview versions of said possible multimedia content items from said server, and to communicate to the buyer data processing system data representative of said preview versions of said possible multimedia content items, and

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a transaction controller operable, in response to selection data representative of a selection of at least one of said possible preview versions of said multimedia content items from said buyer, to communicate to said vendor identified by said stored identification data ordering said selected multimedia content items, and to complete a sales transaction for the selected multimedia material with the buyer.

Claim 2. (original) A multimedia transaction processor as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said meta data comprises a plurality of different types, each different type of said meta data describing a different aspect of said multimedia content.

Claim 3. (previously presented) A multimedia transaction processor as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said preview versions of said multimedia material items include a watermark in order to identify the vendor of said multimedia material.

Claim 4. (canceled)

Claim 5. (previously presented) A multimedia transaction processor as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said selection data includes an indication of a selected part of said selected multimedia item, said communications processor being operable in combination with said transaction controller to complete said sales transaction by debiting an amount of money corresponding to said selected part of said media item, with respect to the total cost of said selected media item.

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Claim 6. (previously presented) A multimedia transaction processor as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said server is arranged to store business rules data representative of the conditions for the sale of said selected multimedia material items, said access processor communicating said conditions of sale data to said buyer in response to one of said selection data and said requesting data.

Claim 7. (previously presented) A multimedia transaction processor as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said access processor is operable in response to said selection data to generate and to store data representing the number of times buyers select said multimedia material items.

Claim 8. (previously presented) A multimedia transaction processor as claimed in Claim 7, wherein said access processor is operable to determine the number of times multimedia content items owned by a particular vendor are selected by said buyers, and said communications processor is operable in combination with said access processor to communicate on request, data representative of said number of times said multimedia content items are selected, to said particular vendor providing said multimedia content.

Claim 9. (previously presented) A multimedia transaction processor as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said access processor is operable to receive catalogue data representing a list of multimedia material items provided by a vendor divided into predetermined categories, said catalogue data being communicated on request to a buyer data processing system.

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Claim 10. (previously presented) A multimedia transaction processor as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said media server is arranged to store data representative of advertising material, and said access processor is operable to communicate said advertising data to said buyer data processing system in response to said request data.

Claim 11. (previously presented) A multimedia transaction processor as claimed in Claim 2, wherein said request data comprises at least one data value and an indication of which of said types of meta data said data value corresponds, said access processor being operable to search said server for said possible multimedia content items by searching for values corresponding to said data value for said meta data type corresponding to said indication.

Claim 12. (previously presented) A multimedia transaction processor as claimed in Claim 2, wherein said access processor is operable to generate at least one meta data value for at least one meta data type from said request data, and to retrieve said possible multimedia content items by searching said server for multimedia content items having meta data values corresponding to said at least one generated meta data value.

Claim 13. (previously presented) A multimedia transaction processor as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said access processor is operable to compare said request data with meta data stored in said server and to retrieve meta data which corresponds with said request data, and to operate in combination with said communications processor to communicate said retrieved meta data to said buyer data processing systems, said access processor being operable to retrieve

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multimedia content items corresponding to selected retrieved meta data received from a buyer user data processing system.

Claim 14. (previously presented) A multimedia transaction processor as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said transaction controller includes an account management system operable to store data representative of bank accounts of said buyer and said vendor, and consequent upon receipt of said selection data, to complete said transaction by transferring money to be charged to said bank account of said vendor from the bank account of said buyer, said amount of money being determined in dependence upon said pre-stored cost of buying said selected multimedia content items.

Claim 15. (previously presented) A multimedia transaction processor as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said multimedia material includes one of data, video data, audio data and audio/video data.

Claim 16. (previously presented) A multimedia processing system comprising a multimedia transaction processor as claimed in Claim 1, a plurality of data processing systems coupled to said transaction processor via a data communications network.

Claim 17. (previously presented) A multimedia processing system as claimed in Claim 16, wherein said data communications network includes the Internet.

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Claim 18. (currently amended) A method of vending multimedia material, said method comprising the steps of

- identifying said multimedia material to be sold,
- generating meta data describing the content of said multimedia material,
- generating data representing a predetermined price for the sale of said multimedia material,
- associating data representative of the owner of said multimedia material with said multimedia material and said meta data,
- generating a preview version of multimedia material, the preview version of the multimedia material being formed with perceivable impairments produced by generating a reduced quality representation of the material, to the effect that an amount of data required to represent the multimedia material is substantially reduced,
- arranging for said preview version of said multimedia material, said meta data, said ownership data and said predetermined price for sale to be ingested by a media server of a multimedia transaction processor,
- arranging for buyers to establish a transaction account,
- receiving from said buyers data indicative of a request for multimedia content,
- generating meta data from said data requesting said multimedia content and comparing said generated meta data with the meta data stored in association with said preview versions of said multimedia material, and from the comparison retrieving said preview versions of said possible multimedia content items from said server,
- communicating to said buyers said preview version of said multimedia material,

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- providing a facility for said buyers to select desired items of multimedia material and to complete a transaction for said selected multimedia material items using said transaction account, and
- arranging for said vendor to communicate said selected multimedia material items to said buyers.

Claim 19. (currently amended) A method of buying multimedia material using a transaction processor having a media server operable to store a preview version of multimedia material items, which are received from one or more vendors, the preview version of the multimedia material being formed with perceivable impairments produced by generating a reduced quality representation of the material, to the effect that an amount of data required to represent the multimedia material is substantially reduced, and the reduced quality discourages copying of the multimedia material, and to store in association with the previous version of the multimedia material, meta data representing the content of the multimedia material and data identifying the vendor providing the multimedia material, a communications processor connectable, via a communications link, to one or more data processing systems and operable to receive, via said communications link, from one of said data processing systems, data indicative of a request for multimedia content from a buyer, an access processor operable to retrieve from said server preview versions of possible multimedia material content items corresponding to said requested multimedia content by generating meta data from said data requesting said multimedia content and comparing said generated meta data with the meta data stored in association with said preview versions of said multimedia material, and from the comparison retrieving said preview versions of said possible multimedia content items from said server, and to

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communicate to the buyer data processing system data representative of said preview versions of said possible multimedia content items, and a transaction controller operable, in response to selection data representative of a selection of at least one of said possible preview versions of said multimedia content items from said buyer, to communicate to said vendor identified by said stored identification, data ordering said selected multimedia content items, and to complete a sales transaction for the selected multimedia material with the buyer, said method comprising the steps of

- establishing an account with the multimedia transaction processor,
 - communicating data representative of a request for a desired multimedia material item to said transaction processor via a data communications network,
 - receiving possible preview versions of said multimedia material items from said transaction processor,
 - previewing said possible preview versions of said multimedia material items,
 - selecting desired multimedia items from said preview versions,
 - communicating data representative of said selection to said transaction processor,
 - completing a transaction for the purchase of said selected multimedia material items,
- and
- arranging for the owner of said multimedia material to communicate said selected material items to said buyer.

Claims 20-27. (canceled)

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Claim 28. (previously presented) A computer program providing computer executable instructions, which when loaded onto a computer configures the computer to operate as a multimedia transaction processor as claimed in Claim 1.

Claim 29. (previously presented) A computer program providing computer executable instructions, which when loaded on to a computer causes the computer to perform the method according to Claim 18.

Claim 30. (previously presented) A computer program product having a computer readable medium recorded thereon information signals representative of the computer program claimed in Claim 28.

Claims 31-34. (canceled)

Claim 35. (previously presented) A computer program providing computer executable instructions, which when loaded on to a computer causes the computer to perform the method according to Claim 19.

Claims 36-37. (canceled)

Claim 38. (previously presented) A computer program product having a computer readable medium recorded thereon information signals representative of the computer program claimed in Claim 29.

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Claim 39. (previously presented) A computer program product having a computer readable medium recorded thereon information signals representative of the computer program claimed in Claim 35.

Claims 40-41. (canceled)